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Sixteenth session
Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS

1989 REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL AT ITS SIXTEENTH SESSION

Summary

The 1989 report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) to the Governing Council, which was adopted by the ACC on 19 October 1989, is submitted to the Council in pursuance of the Council's decision 14/4 in which the ACC was requested to continue to report to the Council on an annual basis.

The report is divided into two parts, the first dealing with certain environmental matters of current concern to the Governing Council and to the ACC, specifically the issue of climate change; environmentally sound and sustainable development; application of environmental guidelines to operational activities of the system; new international development strategy; a proposed United Nations centre for urgent environmental assistance; the feasibility study of a joint statement on the environment; and preparations for the anticipated United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The second part of the reports deals with the co-ordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

ACC Annual Report to the Governing Council

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted to the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) in discharge of the responsibilities assumed by the Committee in pursuance to General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system and General Assembly resolution 32/172 of 19 December 1977 on the United Nations Conference on Desertification, requesting the Committee to report each year to the Governing Council on the status of implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, in accordance with recommendation 27 of the Plan.

2. In its decisions 14/2 and 14/4 of 18 June 1987, the Governing Council invited the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to continue to report to the Council on an annual basis on co-ordination. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination adopted the present report on 19 October 1989.

3. The report is divided into two parts, the first dealing with certain environmental matters of current concern to the Governing Council and to ACC, the second with the co-ordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

I. GENERAL CO-ORDINATION MATTERS

4. ACC is well aware of the increasing dimension of environmental issues - global, regional and national - and of the growing awareness of member States of the importance of addressing environmental concerns while they endeavour to achieve development objectives. Such concern has been evident at almost all recent meetings of heads of State and Government, as is the desire to see these issues addressed more effectively by the United Nations system. At the intergovernmental level, as witnessed by considerations at the General Assembly and the Governing Council of UNEP, there is a fresh thrust and new sense of direction which is reflected in the call for a United Nations conference on environment and development.

5. This growing political consciousness will need to be translated into more effective action taken in a concerted manner by member States and the United Nations system. ACC considers that the United Nations system is best suited to ensure that global environmental issues are approached in a co-ordinated manner and within a wide context, through the contribution of all the organizations concerned. The rapidly accelerating pace of activity will call for a greater requirement for resources from member States to enable the United Nations system to play the role it should regarding the environment in conjunction with other critical programmes also of high priority to member States.

6. ACC notes with satisfaction the appreciation expressed by the Governing Council at its fifteenth session as regards the ACC's 1987 and 1988 reports on co-ordination in the field of environment. In its decision 15/11 entitled "Reports of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination", the UNEP Governing Council had welcomed the Committee's agreement to examine the appropriate modalities for strengthening co-ordination among the organizations of the United Nations system in the field of environment and recommended that the Committee should take into account, inter alia, the recommendations contained in the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond and previous recommendations of the Council relating to co-ordination. ACC will work to ensure that the preparatory process for the proposed United Nations Conference on environment and development leads to the further strengthening of co-ordination.

7. ACC welcomes Governing Council decision 15/1 on "Strengthening the role and effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Programme" in which the essential role of UNEP as the central catalysing, co-ordinating and stimulating body in the field of the environment within the United Nations system is re-affirmed. It notes the decision that the Bureau of its fifteenth session should, on an experimental basis, meet with their counterparts in the organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to develop more positive and collaborative relationships. ACC welcomes the decision to set a target of $100 million for contribution to the Environment Fund by the year 1992 and looks forward to the achievement of that target which should facilitate the relevant activities being carried out throughout the United Nations system.

8. The Governing Council has set out areas in which system-wide efforts in regard to environment should be concentrated, as well as areas to which UNEP should give special attention. ACC is aware of the collaborative efforts which will be required, and agrees that members should co-operate accordingly.

A. Climate Change

9. ACC notes the increased international awareness of the global climate change issue as reflected in General Assembly resolution 43/53 entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind" and the large number of international meetings, conferences and symposia on the subject. It notes in particular, the sixth meeting of heads of agencies which took place in 1989 on the subject. ACC recalls its agreement, at its first regular session of 1989, on possible areas for action by organizations of the United Nations system in that field and notes with satisfaction the follow-up given by the organizations to this decision.

10. In its report to the fifteenth session of the Governing Council, ACC had noted with appreciation a number of actions by United Nations bodies and agencies in this area. ACC welcomes the decisions of the UNEP Governing Council and the Executive Council of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on the subject. It further noted that WMO jointly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) and UNEP is preparing for the Second World Climate Conference (Geneva, November 1990), which, in addition to a broad review on the current state of the climate issue based mainly on the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), would serve as a policy forum on this important problem.

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11. ACC notes in particular the request made by the UNEP Governing Council in decision 15/36, entitled "Global climate change", that the Executive Director, in co-operation with the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, should begin preparations for negotiations on a framework convention on climate, and the recommendation that such negotiations should be initiated as soon as possible immediately after the adoption of the interim report of the WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). ACC further notes WMO Executive Council's resolutions 4, 5 and 6 on global climate change which also request its Secretary-General to begin preparations for negotiations on a framework convention in co-operation with the Executive Director of UNEP. ACC also notes that, considering the urgent need of improving the monitoring of the composition of the atmosphere, WMO has established the Global Atmosphere Watch as an early warning system to detect further changes in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and the consequent climate change. ACC agrees that the report of IPCC should be instrumental in the identification and evaluation of a range of response strategies, including the elements of a future framework convention on climate change, atmospheric monitoring, technological measures, financial measures, economic measures and educational measures.

12. ACC further welcomes the progress made by the various components of the World Climate Programme and by the IPCC in its work. It also welcomes the agreement within IPCC, in line with paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 43/53, that its work include the following main tasks, each to be accomplished by a working group and thereafter collated in a single report:

Working Group I: Assessment of available scientific information on climate change;

Working Group II: Assessment of environmental, health, socio-economic and other impacts of climate change;

Working group III: Formulation of response strategies.

13. ACC notes with satisfaction the recommendations made by IPCC at its second session in June 1989. It welcomes the consideration of measures to increase the participation of developing countries in IPCC activities: this will include formulating and implementing a crash programme of seminars to disseminate information to opinion-makers and others; and setting up an ad hoc subgroup of IPCC on matters related to developing countries in order to identify and implement further measures to increase their participation in IPCC activities.

B. Environmentally sound and sustainable development

14. ACC welcomes the increased emphasis placed in the United Nations system on environmentally sound and sustainable development following the adoption by the General Assembly of the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond and its welcoming of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, in its resolutions 42/186 and 42/187.

15. ACC welcomes the views expressed by the UNEP Governing Council in decision 15/2 entitled "Implementation of resolutions and decisions of direct relevance to the United Nations Environment Programme adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-second and forty-third sessions and by the Economic and

Social Council at its sessions in 1987 and 1988", on efforts towards environmentally sound and sustainable development and the views expressed by the Council regarding long-term strategies and new environmental concerns. In this context, ACC reiterates its view that the DOEM mechanism could be instrumental in keeping under review the progress made by the United Nations system towards sustainable development and in co-ordinating its appropriate efforts.

16. ACC recalls its intention, expressed in its reports to the fifteenth session of the Governing Council, to work collectively with three developing countries, in integrating environmental considerations in the process of social and economic development and planning, in the hope that these experiments would ultimately lead to the design of methodologies and guidelines for integrating environmental and natural resources considerations in national development plans.

17. ACC notes with satisfaction the establishment of an Inter-Agency Steering Group to work with selected countries in planning for environmentally sound development. The Steering Group held its first meeting in April 1989 in Geneva and agreed that the inter-agency project, including the technical note discussed by the Steering Group, provides an agreed conceptual and practical framework to initiate action at the national level and for inter-agency co-operation in the project implementation.

C. Application of environmental guidelines to operational activities of the system

18. ACC recalls the attention which was paid in its earlier reports to the integration of environmental considerations into the process of economic and social development and into development planning. In decision 1988/24 the Committee had decided that a review would be carried out by a consultant on the approaches to be followed by organizations of the United Nations system with regard to environmental guidelines and their application to the operational activities of the system.

19. ACC notes that DOEM attached importance to rapid progress on this issue and welcomes the initiation of the review by the outside consultant.

D. New international development strategy

20. In decision 15/11, the UNEP Governing Council noted the intention of the members of the Committee to contribute to the development of the proposed new international development strategy, bearing in mind the view expressed by the Governing Council at its first special session that environmentally sound and sustainable development should be one of the main objectives of proposed new strategy (Governing Council decision SS.I/1 of 18 March 1988).

21. ACC welcomes the recommendation made by the UNEP Governing Council to the General Assembly, in its decision 15/5 entitled "Contribution of the Governing Council to the preparation of an international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade", that environmentally sound and sustainable development should become a central guiding principle in the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development

decade. It agrees as defined by the UNEP Governing Council in the above-mentioned decision that the critical objectives for environment and development policies that follow from the need for environmentally sound and sustainable development must include creating a healthy, clean and safe environment, reviving growth and improving its quality, remedying the problems of poverty and the satisfaction of human needs through raising the standard of living and the quality of life, addressing the issues of population and of conserving and enhancing the resource base, re-orienting technology and managing risk, and merging environment and economics in decision-making.

22. ACC notes the progress made by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole established by General Assembly resolution 43/182 for the preparation of the strategy and urges all organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to take the above-mentioned objectives into consideration in the development of the strategy.

E. Proposed United Nations centre for urgent environmental assistance

23. ACC notes the request made to the UNEP Executive Director by the UNEP Governing Council, in its decision 15/10 entitled "A United Nations centre for urgent environmental assistance", to assess the advisability of establishing such a centre to ensure rapid response to requests for assistance and the financial implications involved, taking into account the relevant capacities and mandates of the United Nations system. It attaches particular importance to the presentation of a consolidated position of the United Nations system on this issue and believes that all organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system will participate fully in the assessment carried out by UNEP.

F. Joint Statement on the Environment

24. ACC welcomes the initiative of Unesco to conduct a feasibility study for the preparation of a "Joint Statement on the Environment" to be issued regularly. It is envisaged that such a statement would be an authoritative and collective statement by the heads of United Nations agencies and possibly other international scientific organizations, addressed to heads of State and of Government and to other high-level decision makers. It would put forward policy options based on a rigorous scientific assessment of environmental issues which are global in nature. ACC notes that DOEM had discussed this proposal and the support most of the designated officials had accorded to the feasibility study being undertaken by Unesco on behalf of interested organizations. It is understood that a final decision about whether to proceed with the preparation of such a Joint Statement would be made only at the conclusion of the feasibility study. ACC would be informed of the results of this study, expected to be completed during the first quarter in 1990.

G. Preparations for an anticipated United Nations conference on environment and development

25. ACC notes the consideration given to the issue of convening the conference by the United Nations General Assembly at its forty-third session, by UNEP Governing Council and by the Economic and Social Council.

26. ACC considers that a conference of the nature envisaged in General Assembly resolution 43/196, entitled "United Nations conference on environment and development", and in UNEP Governing Council decision 15/3, entitled "United Nations conference on environment and development", would be a complex endeavour addressing large number of issues with which the United Nations system is actively engaged. By mobilizing the necessary political will, and injecting a fresh sense of commitment, the conference may well give strong impetus to the efforts of the United Nations system. It is essential that the continuing efforts of the organizations of the system be taken fully into account in the preparatory process for the conference as indeed the outcome of the conference will need fully to be taken into account by those organizations. Accordingly, ACC stresses the importance of the preparatory process actively involving the organizations of the United Nations system, particularly UNEP, and drawing upon their resources of knowledge and expertise. The active participation of all countries, and in particular of the developing countries, would be critical to the success of the conference.

27. The conference should address the overall issues as set out in the General Assembly resolution 43/196 in such manner as to lead to concrete measures with a clear indication and commitment that the necessary resources to enable their implementation, - nationally, regionally or globally, - including for the needed efforts of the United Nations system, would be identified as to source and made available. The conference should lead to a strengthening of the capacities of the developing countries, as well as of the organizations of the United Nations system, to carry out the consequent responsibilities and also identify financial resources to do so.

28. ACC recalls that at its April 1989 session, it had agreed to establish an ad hoc task force at the executive head level, which would serve as an inter-agency mechanism for the United Nations system-wide preparations for a United Nations conference on environment and development. A meeting of the task force is expected to take place in the new year following the General Assembly session. ACC decides to keep the Governing Council informed of the work of the ad hoc task force.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (PACD)

29. ACC welcomes Governing Council decision 15/23 on desertification which entrusted more responsibility to the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification (IAWGD) for co-ordination and joint programming on desertification control, as well as requesting it "to undertake joint inter-agency action to mobilize technical and financial resources to assist national activities to develop and implement national programmes to combat desertification". This responsibility has been given in view of the proposal to limit the role of Consultative Group for Desertification Control to the exchange of information on scientific research in the field of desertification control and on the status of implementation of the Plan of Action.

30. The ACC notes with satisfaction the action taken by IAWGD to review the measures to enhance its work required by the decision of the Governing Council. In this regard, the Committee endorses the following recommendations proposed by IAWGD to implement the Governing Council decision:

(a) The measures taken for better analytical and uniform reporting of activities of members to combat desertification, in order to identify successful projects, constraints and gaps to facilitate joint activities. Such information will be available through a compatible computerized data base system accessible to all members, such as the United Nations International Emergency Network (UNIENET);

(b) The proposal for inter-agency co-operation at subregional level as a test case in collaboration with the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference in two or three countries to promote joint activities and develop methodologies aimed at combating desertification. The results would influence possible extension to other subregions and regions;

(c) The first thematic joint programming exercise under IAWGD will focus on the important activity of assessment of desertification, bearing in mind the global assessment of desertification for 1992, as requested by General Assembly resolution 42/189 A of 11 December 1987.

31. ACC takes note with satisfaction of the increased assistance provided by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office - on behalf of UNEP and United Nations Development Programme - to the desertification control programmes of the 22 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region and of its role in co-ordinating the evaluation of the implementation of the desertification and drought control components of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990.

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Corrigendum

Paragraph 30 (c), last line

For resolution 42/189 A of 11 December 1987. read resolution 33/168 A of 17 December 1984.

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